

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated March 18, 2003 (Paper No. 18). Claims 1 to 10, 12 to 18, 40 and 42 to 79 are in the application, with Claims 63 to 79 having been added herein. Claims 11 and 41 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 1, 12, 42, 49, 63 to 68, 70, 72, 74, 75, 77 and 79 are the independent claims. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

The specification was objected to for informalities. In response, Applicant has amended the specification to address the issues raised in the Office Action.

Claims 56 to 59 were also objected to for informalities. Applicant has amended these claims to attend to the issue raised in the Office Action. Withdrawal of the objection to Claims 56 to 59 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action contended that Claims 11 and 56 were substantial duplicates of each other. Applicant has canceled Claim 11 in the application.

Claim 41 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. Without conceding the correctness of the rejection, Applicant has canceled Claim 41 thereby rendering the rejection moot.

Claims 1, 11, 40 and 56 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,178,029 (Kamikubo); Claims 2, 8, 9, 12, 18, 42, 48, 49, 57, 58, 60 and 61 were rejected under § 103(a) over Kamikubo in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,978,975 (Saito);

Claims 2, 4, 8, 9, 12, 14, 18, 42, 44, 48, 49, 51, 55, 57, 58, 60 and 61 were rejected under § 103(a) over Kamikubo in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,606,449 (Nishiyama); Claims 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, 13, 18, 42, 43, 48 to 50, 55, 57, 58, 60 and 61 were rejected under § 103(a) over Kamikubo in view of Saito and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,963,356 (Kato); Claims 5, 15, 45 and 52 were rejected under § 103(a) over Kamikubo in view of Saito and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,124,962 (Kamikubo '962); and Claims 6, 7, 16 to 18, 46, 47, 53 and 54 were rejected under § 103(a) over Kamikubo in view of Saito and Kamikubo '962 and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,365,259 (Kanoto). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections for the following reasons.

Applicant notes that the March 12, 1999, filing date of Japanese Patent Application No. 11-066536, from which this application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, predates the effective filing date of Kamikubo. A sworn translation of priority Application No. 11-066536 accompanies this Amendment and, pursuant to MPEP § 201.15, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to confirm for himself that Applicant is entitled to the March 12, 1999, priority date and thereafter remove Kamikubo as a prior art reference. For completeness, a sworn translation of Japanese Patent Application No. 2000-063399, from which this application also claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119, accompanies this amendment.

With the removal of Kamikubo as a prior art reference, the prior art rejections set forth above are rendered moot. No other matters having been raised in the Office Action, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa,
California, office by telephone at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should be directed
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Respectfully submitted,



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